
February 15, 2023



TESTIMONY OF SCOTT DOLCH, PRESIDENT & CEO, CONNECTICUT RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

HB 6606: An Act Concerning the Use of Certain Products Made from Polystyrene
HB 6608: An Act Concerning the Distribution of Single-Use Plastic Straws by Certain Restaurants

On behalf of Connecticut's 8,600 restaurant and foodservice locations, the Connecticut Restaurant Association appreciates the opportunity to testify in opposition to House Bill 6606 and House Bill 6608. In addition to the economic stressors of attracting employees, inflation, and the high cost of goods, this legislation would have a significant negative impact that singles out the restaurant, catering, and foodservice industry.

Restaurants and foodservice locations are vital to Connecticut's economy, generating over \$9.6 billion in annual sales and employing more than 135,000 employees, which accounts for nearly 10% of Connecticut's workforce. Proposals like these send the wrong message to such a critical industry in our state.

HB 6606 seeks to eliminate the use of polystyrene containers for food from restaurants. A majority of restaurants have made the transition to other, more environmentally friendly to-go containers on their own and others are working hard to find alternatives. For an industry that relies heavily on take-out, we believe that this bill will increase costs and do more harm to one of Connecticut's most vital industries.

HB 6608 would only allow plastic straws in full-service restaurants upon request by a customer, while quick-serve restaurants would still be permitted to provide straws to customers with their orders. This would be a confusing and unenforceable mandate on only a specific sector of the restaurant industry. Again, many restaurants are moving away from plastic straws in favor of more environmentally friendly options.

While we appreciate the intent of this proposal, we also know that this language would have a significant financial burden aimed directly at the restaurant industry where so many are struggling to operate. We support the ability of restaurant owners and operators to make the best choices for their business and customers. Thus, we ask that the Committee reject these proposals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony.